



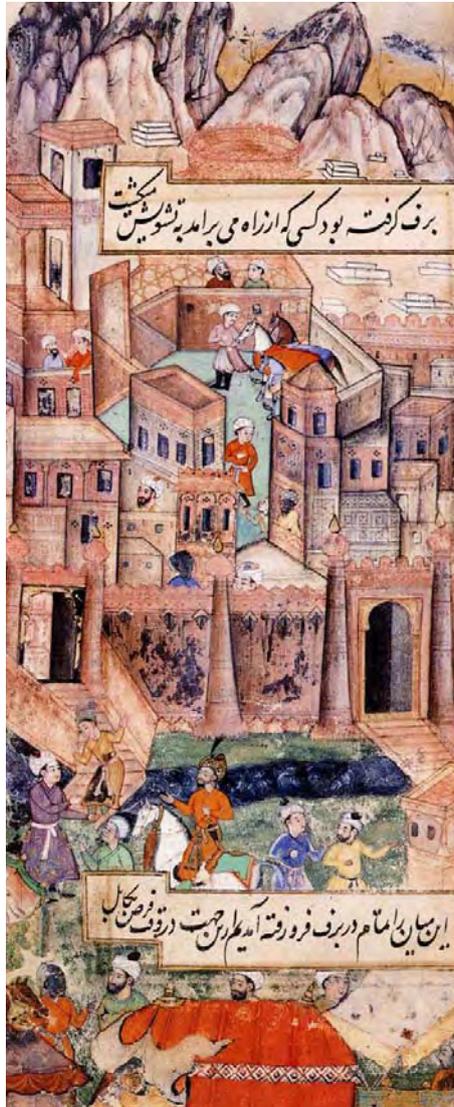
ONGOING ACTIVITIES

KABUL IN THE 16th CENTURY

As a preliminary architectural survey takes place of the Bala Hissar, the historic citadel of Kabul, in collaboration with the department of Historic Monuments, an intriguing account has come to light about the turmoil that followed the death in 1556 of the Mughal emperor Humayun. Written by a loyal military officer, Bayazid Bayat, the 'Memoir of Humayun and Akbar' (re-printed in Calcutta in 1941) provides an insight into the layout and use of the citadel and adjoining quarters.

Bayat was responsible for defending the citadel, from where Humayun's infant son Mirza Hakim nominally ruled Kabul and where the rest of the family and their attendants still lived, during an 120 day siege by 10,000 men led by Mirza Sulaiman of Badakhshan. The account describes how separate contingents of Badakhshi forces approached from the north, past Khwaja 'Abd al-Samad Kabuli's shrine (in present-day Asheqan wa Arefan, which is the focus of AKTC's ongoing conservation work) and from Gulkana and Nakhas in the south to assemble in an open prayer area (namazgah) in what is today the cemetery Shuhada-i-Salihin. Orders had been given in advance to the defending forces to demolish all buildings around the citadel, and remove their roof-beams inside the walls, so that the besieging forces could be kept at bay with guns and grenades (tofang o zanburak). With occasional sorties of cavalry made from the tower at Usstur Gardan (camel's neck), the besieging forces finally retreated before the autumn snows closed the passes to the north, travelling via the village of Deh Ma'mura at the foot of the Pay Minar pass which, as in Babur's time, was still the main route north out of Kabul.

The relevant passages of Bayat's account, which were kindly made available by Simon Digby, were translated from the Persian by Bruce Wannell, historian and linguist, who continues to assist the AKTC team in identifying historic documentation on the cities of Kabul and Herat.



Babur riding below the walls of Bala Hissar, Kabul. ca. 1507
Courtesy Victoria & Albert Museum (cropped miniature).



Baghe Babur Trust

MANAGING BAGHE BABUR, KABUL

The growing number of inhabitants of Kabul who visit Baghe Babur will have noticed changes in recent weeks, resulting from the introduction of a new system of management of this important historic site. Following the signature of a partnership agreement between Kabul Municipality, the Ministry of Information & Culture and AKDN, an independent Baghe Babur Trust has been established to operate the garden. In order to ensure that the restored landscape and monuments can be maintained to appropriate standards, the Trust aims over time to achieve financial sustainability by generating revenue from entrance fees, and appropriate public events in the various facilities.

For further information, contact the Garden Manager Amanullah Sahibzada on 0799-305 934 or amanullahsahibzada@hotmail.com.

ORAL HISTORY IN KABUL OLD CITY

Another dimension of the documentation of the history of the old city lies in the ongoing collection of oral testimony. Since mid-2006, Khadem Hussain has interviewed residents of areas where conservation work has been initiated by AKTC. A rich mix of fact and legend about specific monuments, personalities and practices emerges from the 50 or more interviews that have been conducted to date. Supported by co-funding from the Open Society Institute, the aim is promote an understanding of the lives and beliefs of inhabitants of the historic quarters.





■ UPGRADING IN HERAT OLD CITY

Since last reporting (Newsletter #5 Jan/Feb 2007) on living conditions for the inhabitants of the historic quarters, significant investments have been made in upgrading drainage and access in Bar Durrani and Abdullah Mesri. Both quarters had systems of underground drains, up to 6 metres below the current ground level, which had either fallen into disrepair or been damaged. Some 590 metres of existing drain has been repaired since the start of activities in 2005, while another 1660 metres has been entirely re-built, using similar brick vaulting to that found in the historic system. A system of manholes has been introduced to enable the cleaning of the system, while surface channels have been incorporated into the 3690 m² of stone cobbled paving that has been laid along the alleyways and streets (see above photo). Together these measures have generated more than 27,000 work-days of employment since 2005, with significant community inputs. In a context where rising damp and contamination of shallow water supplies has long been a problem, AKTC's upgrading work directly benefits some 2,000 inhabitants of these quarters.

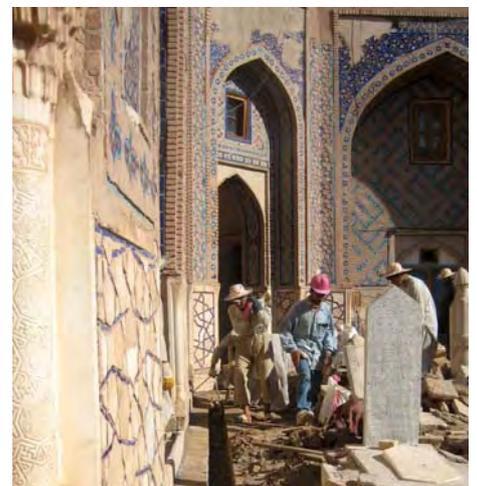


■ VISIT BY H.E. GOVERNOR OF HERAT

The need for further investments in infrastructure was among the issues discussed on site with **H.E. Sayed Hussain Anwari**, Governor of Herat – who has recently returned from the UNESCO-sponsored 'Expert Working Group for the Preservation of the Jam and Herat Sites', meeting in Rome – when he visited AKTC's work in the old city with the Mayor on 21st June. The visit provided an opportunity for the Governor and his colleagues to see the extent of the upgrading and conservation work at first hand, and to meet the staff of the AKMICA school in the old city (see above photos).

■ GAZURGAH SHRINE COMPLEX

The grave of the 12th century Sufi poet and scholar, Abdullah Ansari, in Gazurgah is one of the most important religious sites in the region. Situated in the courtyard of an important shrine complex dating from 1425 AD, Ansari's grave remains an important focus for prayer and contemplation to this day. In order to enhance access for visitors, while protecting other fine historic graves that lie in the courtyard, brick paving has been laid on pedestrian paths, surface drainage improved and discrete external lighting installed, while aluminium doors have been replaced with traditional timber examples over the past year. As reported in October 2007 (AKTC Newsletter #9) the documentation of the many historic graves in Gazurgah continues, along with interpretation of the dedications and rich stylistic decoration.



© AKTC/HCSF Most drains led to the perimeter of the old city but, with the growth of settlements around the historic core, it has been important to ensure that the re-opened drains do not simply create additional health hazards to those living downstream. It is envisaged that the drainage works undertaken by AKTC to date will be integrated into systems that may be introduced once resources for a more comprehensive network throughout the historic quarters become available.

For more information about AKTC's programme in Afghanistan, contact us in Qala Moeen Afzal Khan, Gozargah street, District 3, Kabul or Qala Ikhtyaruddin, Herat information@aktc.akdn-afg.org